

HABS  
ILL,  
81-ROCIL,  
3/90-

Rock Island Arsenal  
Barracks  
(AMETA Building, Building 90)  
East Avenue between North Avenue  
and King Drive  
Rock Island  
Rock Island County  
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1001A

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HABS  
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81-ROCIL  
3/90-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL  
BARRACKS  
(AMETA Building, Building 90)

HABS No. IL-1001A

Location:

East Avenue between North Avenue and King  
Drive,  
Rock Island Arsenal,  
Rock Island,  
Rock Island County, Illinois

USGS Davenport East Quadrangle,  
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:  
15.705200.4599230

Present Owner and Occupant:

U.S. Army

Present Use:

Headquarters of U.S. Army Management  
Training Activity (AMETA)

Significance:

After taking command of Rock Island Arsenal in 1865, General Thomas Jefferson Rodman devised a master plan for the installation calling for the construction of ten large manufacturing shops, five on each side of the island's major east-west thoroughfare. These core manufacturing structures were supplemented by a variety of administrative, residential, maintenance, storage, and utility buildings. Although only a few buildings were erected prior to Rodman's death in 1871, subsequent construction under Rodman's nineteenth-century successors closely conformed to the original plan.

Representing one of the largest military construction projects of the late nineteenth century, the various facilities constructed under the Rodman plan are a unique example of military installation planning, design, and construction. In addition to their architectural importance, they constitute the administrative and technological core of Rock Island Arsenal, one of only two "old-line," nineteenth-century arsenals still in operation for munitions production. The buildings are vital for understanding the history of American ordnance development and manufacture from the Spanish American War to the present.

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Located just northeast of the central manufacturing buildings, the Barracks was erected under the Rodman plan in 1872-1873. Designed to accommodate the arsenal's garrison, it continued its original purpose until 1944, when it was converted into quarters for Italian prisoners-of-war. Since 1954, the building has provided classroom and office space for the U.S. Army Engineering Training Activity (AMETA). It is part of the Rock Island Arsenal National Register Historic District.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: "By Act of Congress, June 10, 1872, \$95,000 was appropriated for the construction of the Barracks. A careful study was made in selecting the site with regard to other post buildings and location of the Officers' Quarters. On June 29, 1872, Col. [Daniel Webster] Flagler transmitted the plans and costs of the Barracks to the Chief of Ordnance. Excavating began July 1, 1872, with the stone work foundation commencing July 5, 1872. . . . Due to cost overruns, the plaster work and woodwork on the third floor were left unfinished, as use of this floor would not likely be required for several years. The Barracks was ready for occupancy by the fall of 1873, with a final building cost of \$101,842.04" (Sommer, pp. 2-3).
2. Architect: Not known. Plans were prepared by Ordnance Department staff under the supervision of the arsenal's commandant, Colonel Daniel Webster Flagler (Flagler, pp. 260, 277-278).
3. Original and subsequent owners: U.S. Army.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: "The exterior of the building was constructed of rough range rubble stone with rough ashlar pilasters backed with brick. W. A. Steel of Joliet, Illinois was awarded the contract for the stone at a cost of \$9.48 per cubic yard measured in the wall. Stone from the Water Power Canal on the Island was utilized in the foundation wall" (Sommer, p. 3).

"Due to the Chicago Fire [of 1872] and subsequent rebuilding of Chicago, building materials became increasingly harder to secure, labor costs rose, [and] bricks were being produced too fast

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causing an inferior product. . . . Atkinson and Murdock were awarded the contract for furnishing and laying the brick work, but failing to comply with the terms agreed upon for quality and completion time, they abandoned the job in January 1873. It was then necessary to procure brick in small lots from local dealers and employ brick layers on a day-to-day basis" (Sommer, p. 2).

"The [iron] beams were ordered in two lots. The first from Cooper & Hewitt at a cost of 6.57 cents per pound delivered; the second from Carnegie Kroman & Co. of Pittsburgh costing 6.25 cents per pound delivered" (Sommer, p. 3).

"Daniel Kelcher accomplished the plaster work at a cost of 25 cents per square yard; the slating, costing \$13.00 per square, was done by Huot & Hipwell; and the copper work was done by Fred Haas. The heating furnaces were furnished and installed by Swiler & Fleming at a cost of \$900.00" (Sommer, p. 3).

5. Original plans and construction: The Rock Island Arsenal Engineering Plans and Services Division has an original drawing of the "Front [ie, West] Elevation", dated February 12, 1877 (see HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-12) and published in 1877 (Flagler, Plate IX). In 1877, Flagler described the original construction as follows: "For economy and appearance the face of the wall is range rubble work, without tool marks, instead of the heavy ashlar used in the shops. All the caps, sills, jambs, columns, or spaces between pilasters, are twice as great as in the shops" (Flagler, p. 326). These features are documented by a photograph of the north and west elevations published in 1887 (First Album, n.p.), a copy of which is in the picture collection of the Rock Island Arsenal Historical Office (see HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-9). The same collection has a photograph captioned "Rear View, published in 1898 (Tillinghast, p. 60), that appears to document the original construction of the south and east elevations (see HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-10). In its present configuration, the building departs from the original construction by the removal of all chimneys and the addition of a two-story wing projecting from the center of the east elevation (see HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-2, IL-1001A-3, IL-1001A-4).
6. Alterations and additions: In 1917, a gable-roofed, two-story, stone wing with basement was added to the center of the east elevation. Incorporating the original Greek revival detailing, the wing was joined to the original building only at the first and second-floor levels. At the basement level, a brick driveway separated the two structures (Sommer, p. 3). The Rock Island Engineering Plans and Services Division has the following original drawings for the addition: "Annex to Barracks, North &

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West Elevations," November 23, 1916; "Annex to Barracks, South Elevation," November 23, 1916; "Annex to Barracks, East Elevation," November 23, 1916; "Annex to Barracks, Floor Plans," September 11, 1917. The original features of the wing are shown in a 1944 photograph in the picture collection of the Rock Island Historical Office (see HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-11). The photograph is captioned on the front "66-A / Rock Island Ordnance Center, Rock Island, Illinois, Looking northwest at Barracks, Building #90 / 4 November 1944."

Before 1920, the third floor was finished into several interior spaces for barracks and a lavatory. This work is documented by a drawing in the Rock Island Engineering Plans and Services Division labeled "Stone Barracks / Attic Plan / July 23, 1920 " (see HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-16).

"In approximately 1920, revisions were made in the first floor plans to provide recreational rooms for the soldiers. The wall dividing the main barracks and apartments was removed and the apartments became the Company library and office. The hall stairwells were removed. A squad room in the south wing was divided to provide a billiard room and barber shop while another small room became the post exchange " (Sommer, pp. 4-5). The completed remodeling is shown in a drawing in the Rock Island Arsenal Engineering Plans and Services Division labeled "Stone Barracks / First Floor Plan / July 19, 1920" (see HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-14). During the period 1954-1957, the interior of the building was remodeled into office and classroom space (Sommer, p. 8). After an extensive fire on September 16, 1979, the building was renovated into its present interior configuration (Sommer, p. 9).

At undetermined dates, the slate roof was replaced by composition roofing, all of the original chimneys were removed, and the driveway between the original building and the 1917 wing was blocked up to connect the basement levels.

B. Historical Context:

On June 29, 1872, the arsenal's commandant Colonel Daniel Webster Flagler forwarded plans of the Barracks to the Ordnance Department in Washington. Excavation work began on July 1, 1872, and the building was completed during the fall of the following year. Located just northeast of the central manufacturing area, the Barracks was designed to quarter approximately 170 men and six families. It continued to house the arsenal's garrison until 1944, when it was occupied by Italian prisoners-of-war. Since 1945, the building has provided office and classroom space for the U.S. Army Management

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Engineering Training Activity (AMETA). It has been designated as "Building 90" at least since World War II ("Industrial Facilities Inventory"). (For further documentation see HAER No. IL-20.)

Prepared by: Jeffrey A. Hess  
MacDonald and Mack Partnership  
February 1985

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building is a massive, late Greek Revival style, rectangular-plan, limestone building with a small rectangular addition connected by a narrow hallway. It is two-and-one-half stories above a basement, with a gabled roof sheltering an attic.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is well-maintained and is in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building measures 155' (9 bays) x 57' (3 bays) with a 49' (3 bays) x 10' (1 bay) projecting pavilion (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-1 and IL-1001A-5) centered in the west elevation and a 41' (3 bays) x 21' (1 bay) independent addition (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-2, IL-1001A-3, and IL-1001A-4) connected to the center of the east elevation of the main block by a short hallway. The main building is two-and-one-half stories tall with a full basement and attic. The addition is two stories tall with a full basement.
2. Foundations: Coursed, rock-faced ashlar limestone below a dressed ashlar limestone water table.
3. Walls: Coursed, rock-faced ashlar limestone (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-1, IL-1001A-2, IL-1001A-3, IL-1001A-4, and IL-1001A-5). Colossal rock-faced ashlar limestone pilasters (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-1, IL-1001A-2, IL-1001A-3, and IL-1001A-4, and IL-1001A-5) rising from the water table to the entablature divide the elevations into a regular bay system. The pavilion side bays and the connecting link each contain a single window opening, but all other bays are wider with two window openings in each. The dressed limestone entablature (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-1, IL-1001A-2, IL-1001A-3, IL-1001A-4, and IL-1001A-5) carries a projecting dressed limestone cornice. The pedimented gable ends (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-1, IL-1001A-2, IL-1001A-4, and IL-1001A-5) are rock-faced

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ashlar limestone with dressed limestone cornices.

4. Structural systems: Exterior brick bearing walls with rock-faced ashlar limestone veneer and interior brick bearing walls. First, second, and attic floor systems are wrought-iron joists and stringers with shallow brick vaulting between. The roof system is inaccessible, but is probably iron beams.
5. Porches: Primary porches (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-1, IL-1001A-3, and IL-1001A-5) are centered on the west elevation of the main block and the east elevation of the addition. Secondary porches (HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-4) are centered on the north and south elevations of the main block. Each porch, except the north porch, which is a concrete slab on grade, has a concrete platform and steps with raw aluminum railings. Running from the attic level to the ground on the north and south elevations are steel fire escapes (HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-4) painted tan.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways: Principal first-floor doorways (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-1, IL-1001A-3, and IL-1001A-5) are centered in the west elevation of the main block and the east elevation of the addition. Each has a rock-faced limestone segmental-arched head with a rock-faced keystone, rock-faced limestone jambs, and poured concrete sills. They contain pairs of modern glass doors with transoms and sidelights in raw aluminum framing. Secondary doorways (HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-4) are centered in the north and south elevations of the main block. Originally pairs of window openings, they have rock-faced limestone jambs, concrete sills, and dressed limestone lintels, with the north doorway (because of its basement location) having the water table for its lintel. They each contain pairs of modern glass doors with transoms and sidelights of raw aluminum framing. Individual window openings (HABS Photo No. IL-1001B-4) near the centers of the north and south elevation first, second, and attic stories have had their sash removed and replaced with modern, solid-core, slab, fire doors. Three basement window openings of the east main block elevation contain old, but not original, wood doors.
  - b. Windows: Typical basement, first-, and second-floor window openings (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-1, IL-1001A-2, IL-1001A-3, IL-1001A-4, and IL-1001A-5) have rock-faced limestone jambs, cut limestone sills and flat lintels. The basement window lintels are formed by the water table. There are pairs of window openings (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-1, IL-1001A-3, IL-1001A-5, and IL-1001A-7) above the central doorways of the north, west and south elevations of the main block. These

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have segmental-arched rock-faced limestone voussoirs and key-stones. Typical sash are six-over-six, double-hung, wood, dating from the original construction. A large number of the window openings have been filled with glass block, sometimes with an aluminum awning sash in the bottom. Almost as many window openings have been filled with tan brick, especially on the second floor. The net result is that a minority of window openings retain their original wood sash. The attic window openings (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-1, IL-1001A-2, IL-1001A-3, IL-1001A-4, and IL-1001A-5) are typically arranged in small openings in the building entablature. These window openings have rock-faced jambs and sills and lintels formed by the entablature and frieze. They contain pairs of single-light, casement, wood sash (HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-7). The north and south attic gable ends contain pairs of window openings (HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-4) with rock-faced limestone jambs, segmental-arched, rock-faced limestone arches and keystones and dressed limestone sills. They contain typical wood sash. The west attic gable end contains a round window opening (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-1 and IL-1001A-5) with radiating voussoirs and contains a fixed twenty-five-light, fixed, wood sash (HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-8). The north and south gable ends of the addition each contain a similar window opening (HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-2) with eight-light, fixed, wood sash. All surviving wood sash are painted white.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The main and addition roofs (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-1, IL-1001A-2, IL-1001A-3, IL-1001A-4, and IL-1001A-5) are each a cross-gable form covered with asphalt shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The projecting cornice and eaves (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-1, IL-1001A-2, IL-1001A-3, IL-1001A-4, and IL-1001A-5) are dressed limestone. The interior metal gutter system is tied to exterior metal leaders which lead to an underground drainage system.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The building was constructed as a barracks and has since undergone numerous remodelings, retaining only its basic hallway locations. Most interior partition surfaces date from the past decade. There is a modern passenger elevator near the west center of the pavilion.
  - a. Basement: The basement contains mechanical equipment rooms in the southeast quadrant, offices in the southwest quadrant, a cafeteria in the northwest quadrant, a library and offices in



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the northeast quadrant, an office in the addition, and central halls at the north end meeting a cross hall in the center of the main block.

- b. First and second floors: The first and second floors have typical cross-hall plans with classrooms and some offices. Restrooms are located in the addition.
  - c. Attic: Lacking only the addition and its cross hall, the attic plan is similar to that of the first and second floors. Modern restrooms are located in the center of the east side.
2. Stairways: In the west side of the center of the main block is the original stair hall (HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-6). It contains straight-run stairs along the north and south walls with a bridge-type landing between them. The stairs are cast iron with decorative, open risers, stringers, and railing infill in place of the usual balusters. The stair railing is continuous along the stairs and landings, terminating in the basement with single, cast-iron, newel posts in imitation of turned-wood, newel posts on an octagonal base. The original handrails have been reconstructed in modern oak with a clear varnish finish. Along the wall elevations the original vertical, board wainscoting has been removed and a raw aluminum handrail installed.
  3. Flooring: Basement flooring is poured concrete covered with linoleum tile. The first, second, and attic floors have wood flooring covered with linoleum tile (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-6 and IL-1001A-8).
  4. Wall and ceiling finishes: Outer basement walls are painted rock-faced ashlar limestone in the mechanical rooms, which also have painted brick, interior walls, as well as wire cage partitions. The remainder of the basement has painted gypsum board and modern wood veneer wall coverings and demountable partitions. The ceiling is exposed iron joists and stringers and brick vaulting in the mechanical rooms and a suspended acoustical tile ceiling in the remainder.

First- and second-floor walls (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-6 and IL-1001A-7) are painted plaster, painted gypsum board, modern wood veneer panelling, and demountable partitions. The ceilings (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-6 and IL-1001A-7) are suspended acoustical tile.

The attic walls (HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-8) are painted gypsum board and modern wood veneer panelling. The ceiling is suspended acoustical tile.

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5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Many original doorways survive in the hallways. Unfortunately, no original doors survive. The original doorways now contain modern, fire-rated doors. The molded wood casings of the doorways are the only evidence of their age.
- b. Windows: Window openings (HABS Photo Nos. IL-1001A-7 and IL-1001A-8) have been encased with modern painted gypsum board to match the adjacent walls.

6. Decorative features and trim: Other than the main stairway, few decorative features and trim survive from the original construction. One original cast iron fireplace cover (HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-7) was retained as an historical display at the second-floor main stair landing. Original, molded, wood baseboards survive in the halls and along many of the interior room walls.

7. Hardware: No original hardware survives other than sash cords, pulleys, weights, and ornate lifts of the remaining, wood, double-hung, window sash.

8. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The building is heated by steam radiators from its own furnace room. The original heating system was stoves and fireplaces, now removed.
- b. Lighting: Artificial illumination is by means of fluorescent electrical fixtures (HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-6). No evidence remains of original artificial lighting systems.
- c. Plumbing: No original plumbing fixtures survive.
- d. Elevators: There is a modern passenger elevator.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The building is set on the east east side of East Avenue north of Quarters 34 and south of a golf course. To the south and west lies the complex of the ten stone shops with Building 56, a U.S. Army management engineering training activity annex, located between. The site slopes to the north leaving the north basement elevation fully exposed.

Prepared by: David Arbogast  
Architectural Conservator  
February 1985

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PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings:

All of the drawings listed below are in the Rock Island Arsenal Engineering Plans and Services Division.

"Annex to Barracks, East Elevation," November 23, 1916, RIA B90-B2, D400228H. Shows construction details of 1917 wing.

"Annex to Barracks, North & West Elevations," November 23, 1916, RIA B90-B3, D40028K. Shows construction details of 1917 wing.

"Annex to Barracks, South Elevation," November 23, 1916, RIA B90-B4, D40028C. Shows construction details of 1917 wing.

"Annex to Barracks, Floor Plans," September 11, 1917, RIA B90-A7, D40028F. Shows construction details of 1917 wing.

"Barracks, Front Elevation," February 12, 1877. (See HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-12) Shows original construction of west elevation.

"Stone Barracks, Attic Plan," July 23, 1920, D40028C. (See HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-16) Documents that third floor had been finished into quarters by 1920.

"Stone Barracks, Basement Plan," July 12, 1920, D40028. (See HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-13) Documents construction of 1917 wing.

"Stone Barracks, First Floor Plan," July 19, 1920, D40028A. (See HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-14) Documents construction of 1917 wing.

"Stone Barracks, Second Floor Plan," July 15, 1920, D40028B. (See HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-15) Documents construction of 1917 wing.

B. Early Views:

All of the photographs listed below are in the picture collection of the Rock Island Arsenal Historical Office.

Photograph of west and north elevations, published in 1887, captioned "Soldiers' Barracks". (See HABS No. IL-1001A-9) Documents original construction.

Photograph of east and south elevations, published in 1898, captioned, "The Barracks / Rear View." (See HABS Photo No. IL-1001A-10) Provides earliest known view of these facades and probably shows original construction.

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Photograph of east and south elevations, captioned, "Rock Island Ordnance Center, Rock Island, Illinois, Looking northwest at Barracks, Building #90 / 66-A / 4 November 1944." Shows detailing of the 1917 wing.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Hess, Jeffrey A., and Mack, Robert C. "Historic Properties Report Rock Island Arsenal, Rock Island, Illinois". Prepared by MacDonald and Mack Partnership, and Building Technology Incorporated for the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1985. The report, with accompanying inventory cards, is filed as field records in the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, under HAER No. IL-20.

"Industrial Facilities Inventory, Rock Island Arsenal." Prepared by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, 1946. Rock Island Arsenal Engineering Plans and Services Division. Lists building as "Building 90."

Real Property Cards, Rock Island Arsenal Engineering Plans and Services Division. Briefly describes building's structural characteristics and provides sketchy history of maintenance operations.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Bouilly, Robert. "Arsenal Island." Joined by a River: Quad Cities, ed. Frederick I. Anderson. N. pl.: Lee Enterprises, Incorporated, 1982. Excellent historical analysis of the arsenal's development to about 1910, written by a historian in the Rock Island Arsenal Historical Office.

First Album of the City of Davenport, Ia. Davenport: Huebinger's Photographic Art Gallery, 1887. Reproduces photograph of north and west elevations.

Flagler, D[aniel] W[ebster]. A History of the Rock Island Arsenal from Its Establishment in 1863 to December 1876. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1877. Provides description of building's planning and construction.

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Nothstein, Ira O. and Stephens, Clifford W. A History of Rock Island Arsenal from Earliest Times to 1954. Rock Island: U.S. Army, Rock Island Arsenal, 1965. 3 vols. Rock Island Arsenal Historical Office. The best account of the arsenal's general operations.

Sommer, Sheryl K. The Home of U.S. Army Management Engineering Training Activity. Rock Island Arsenal, 1981. The most detailed account of the building's construction, remodeling, and use.

Tillinghast, B. F. Rock Island Arsenal: In Peace and in War. Chicago: The Shepard Company, 1898. Reproduces photograph of north and west elevations.

D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Record Group 156 at the National Archives contains correspondence on the construction and operation of Rock Island Arsenal from 1871 to 1903. This material is also available on 216 reels of microfilm at the Browning Museum, Rock Island Arsenal.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was part of a program initiated through a memorandum of agreement between the National Park Service and the U.S. Department of the Army. Stanley J. Fried, Chief, Real Estate Branch of Headquarters DARCOM, and Dr. Robert J. Kapsch, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, were program directors. Sally Kress Tompkins of HABS/HAER was program manager, and Robie S. Lange of HABS/HAER was project manager. Building Technology Incorporated, Silver Spring, Maryland, under the direction of William A. Brenner, acted as primary contractor, and MacDonald and Mack Partnership, Minneapolis, was a major subcontractor. The project included a survey of historic properties at Rock Island Arsenal, as well as preparation of an historic properties report and HABS/HAER documentation for 38 buildings. The survey, report, and documentation were completed by Jeffrey A. Hess, historian, Minneapolis; Barbara E. Hightower, historian, Minneapolis; David Arbogast, architectural historian, Iowa City, Iowa; and Robert C. Mack, architect, Minneapolis. The photographs were taken by Robert A. Ryan, J Ceronie, and Bruce A. Harms of Dennett, Muessig, Ryan, and Associates, Ltd., Iowa City, Iowa. Drawings were produced by John Palmer Low, Minneapolis.